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The Right to Freedom

The Bulletin of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna"

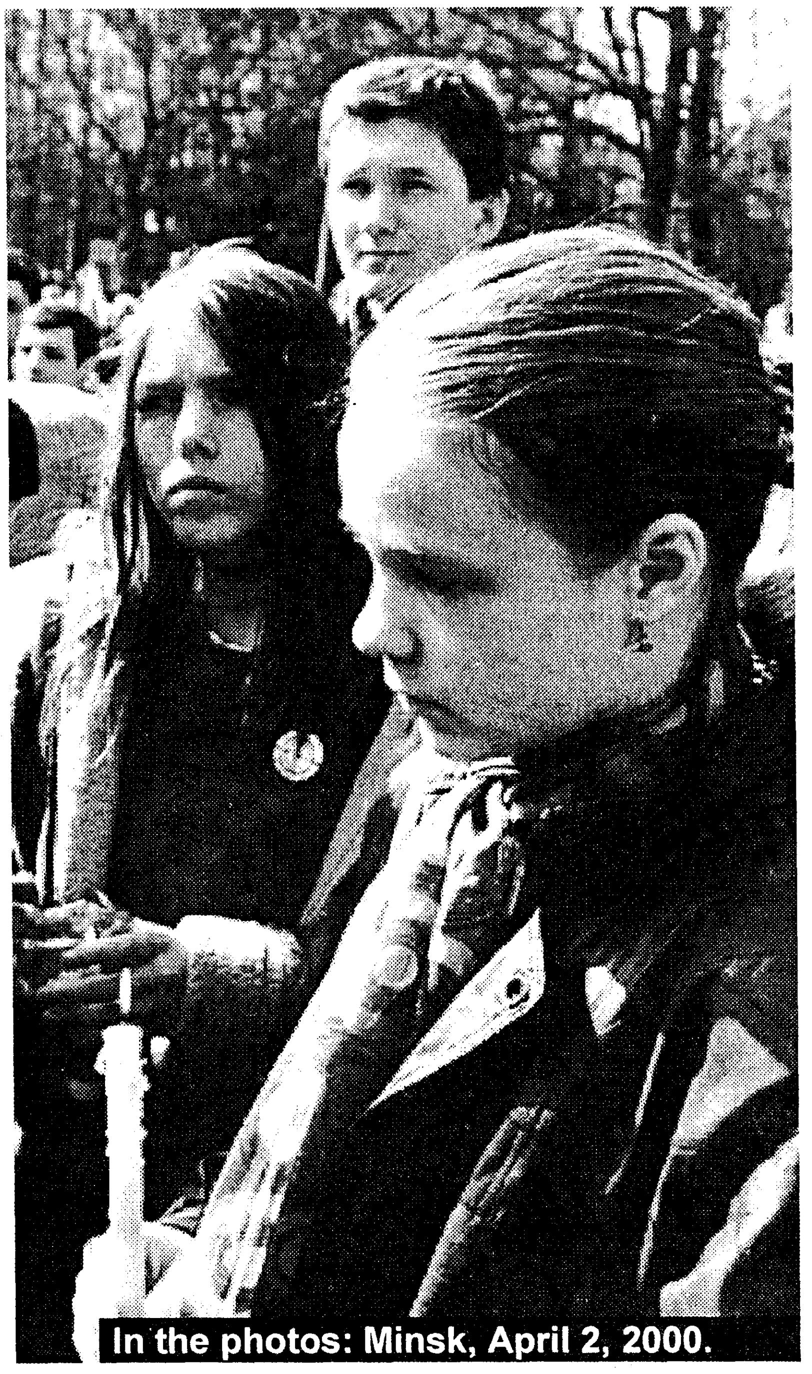


Belarus Will Be Free!

The itch of the Belarusian authorities to fly to arms of Russia is slightly turning into an illness of long standing which exacerbates every spring. The syndrome of «unity» exacerbated in spring during the last four years. As a result of this exacerbation Belarusian delegations were directed to Moscow one after another, the Belarusian and the Russian sides enlarged the quantity of the signed «documents» which obliged neither of them to anything. On April 2, the day, when A. Lukashenko in the integrative ecstasy smashed a glass of vodka in Kremlin for the «eternal friendship», was even proclaimed the two-State holiday «Day of unity of the Russian and the Belarusian people». In the previous years this holiday was celebrated with solemn speeches, concerts of «masters of art» and large-scale partying of the highest authorities. This year, however, the «holiday of unity» hasn't been so much celebrated at a high level. There can be only one reason for it: Lukashenko lost hope (and aim!) to become Russian president for at least next four years (he'll hardly manage to do it at all).

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In the photos: Minsk, April 2, 2000.

Chronicle

On April 6 the trial over Siarhei Malchyk, chairman of Hrodna branch of «Viasna», took place at Hrodna Leninski District Court. Malchyk was found guilty of organization of an unauthorized procession on the Day of Freedom, March 25, and was sentenced to 10 days of administrative arrest. Malchyk didn't take the blame and is convinced of the legal character of his actions. Immediately after the sentence was announced he went on a hunger-strike of protest.

On April 7 the governing authorities of Minsk police apologized to the journalists who were illegally detained on March 25. Representatives of Minsk Main Board of Internal Affairs (MBIA) emphasized that from the very beginning the police had supported the idea that the demonstrators should be allowed to get from Iakub Kolas Square to Banhalor square. They stated that Minsk MBIA were against the violent solution of the conflict situation on March 25. One of the participants of the conversation said that if he had been in Iakub Kolas square in civil clothes he could have also been arrested. And if he had resisted he could have been kicked in kidneys as well. As it was found out, some KGB-workers in civil clothes were detained in Iakub Kolas square too. Some police officials expressed the thought that some officials had provoked the events of March 25 in order to discredit of the present power on the whole. Now the people guilty are searched among the officials of the law machinery. At the meeting with the police officials there were only four journalists, though more than 30 of them had been arrested on March 25.

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Barys HIUNTER

«I Don't Consider Myself Guilty»

Reconsideration of the administrative case against the member of the Human Rights Center «Viasna» Barys Hiunter who was judged as an organizer of «March of Freedom-1» started at Minsk Savetski District Court.

On April 13 the process of reconsideration of the administrative case against the member of the Human Rights Center «Viasna», deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the 13th Convocation Barys Hiunter, began at Minsk Savetski District Court.

On October 18, 1999 Barys Hiunter was accused of having taken part in organization of «March of Freedom» on October 17 and not having taken the appropriate measures for retention of the public order during the action. Judge Ruslan Kazadaiew found Hiunter guilty of violation of Article No. 167.2 of CAI (organization of an unauthorized procession) and sentenced him to 15 days of administrative arrest. But during the case consideration the judge made some law violations. One of them was his refusal to satisfy Hiunter's claim to allow his advocate's participation in the trial. While being kept in the special police department in Akrestsin street Barys Hiunter directed a complaint to chairman of Minsk City Court. When Hiunter received a negative answer, he appealed against the sentence made by Savetski District Court to the Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus. The Supreme Court abolished the sentence made by Savetski District Court and directed it for reconsideration by another judge of the same court.

This time judge Aksana Reliava considered the case. Hiunter was defended by a well-known Bealrusian advocate, vice-chairman of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee Hary Pahaniaila. In his speech Barys Hiunter emphasized that he wasn't guilty and explained his position to the court. He said that he had executed all his commitments during the authorized meeting in Banhalor Square. According to the Law of Republic of Belarus «About demonstrations, meetings, processions and pickets» Barys Hiunter, being an organizer of the action, was to be present during the action and maintain the public order. And he executed these demands of the law. Hiunter also pointed out that Banhalor square and so called Park of Peoples' Friendship (a ground for walking with dogs) weren't at all a good place for mass actions. So, it was impossible for the people who participated in the meeting to leave this place immediately after the end of the action. Hiunter said that it were the city authorities and bodies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs who were responsible for the events that had taken place after the end of the action.

Zmicer Iukhnovich and Iawhen Saroka, policemen from the Department of Investigation of Economical Crimes of Savetski District Department of Internal Affairs (DDIA) participated in the trial in the capacity of witnesses. Being questioned by H. Pahaniaila whether he noticed any violations of public order during the meeting, Z. Iukhnovich said that the organizers and participants of the

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There Are Obvious Political Reasons...

The Ministry of Justice postponed registration of the pubic assembly «Workers' Union «Unity»» created by Siarhei Antonchyk due to wire-drawn reasons.

On March 16 chairman of the public assembly «Workers' Union «Unity»» (PA WUU) Siarhei Antonchyk submitted the documentation necessary for registration of the organization to the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Belarus.

On April 11 M. Sukhinin, the head of the board of public organizations at the Ministry of Justice, postponed the registration, or, actually, withheld it.

In the document, called «About the registration postponement» M. Sukhinin informed Antonchyk that the «decision to register the public assembly «Workers' Union «Unity»» can't be made because the name of the assembly doesn't meet the requirements of Article No. 121 of the Civil Code of the Republic of Belarus. One more argument against the registration was ostensible «contradiction of point 4.1 of the Statute to point 6.1».

Such grounding of the registration postponement is not only a shining example of obvious wish of officials from the Ministry of Justice to find any reasons for refusal, but also the level of their education. You can see it yourself. S. Antonchyk submitted the documents in Russian, Sukhinin answered him in Belarusian. At first sight it seems that we should praise such attitude to the native language, but... M. Sukhinin translated the Russian «Edinstvo» (unity) as the Belarusian «Iadnanne» (community). That's why the answer was given not to the Worker's Union, but to some defunct organization, public assembly ...»Community»

One could think that the answer was given not to Antonchyk's organization but to another one and got into Antonchyk's hands by mistake. And it might have even been true, if the refusal had not been given directly to Antonchyk and he had not signed the confirmation that he had received it.

Analysis of the second argument also causes doubts in the level of competence of the officials. So, in point 4.12 of the Statute it is said: «PA WUU is an integral organization without any territorial bodies». Here the organization structure is described. In point 6.1 there's description of the order of stoppage of the Union's activity or its reorganization: «PA WUU can be reorganized according to the decision of the Assembly only if 2/3 of it's present members vote for it». So, these two points by no means contradict each other and can't contradict according to the elementary logical thinking.

By the way, in Article No. 14, «Postponement of registration» of the Law of the Republic of Belarus on public associations it's stated that registration can be postponed for three months if the order of creation of public assembly, stated in this law, was violated. But in the answer given to Antonchyk we see another motivation.

It's also quite interesting that the authorities did many things in order to get some reasons for refusal to register S. Antonchyk's Union. For instance, workers and the unemployed decided to carry out the organization assembly at «Svislach» hotel. They submitted an application to the hotel officials and paid for the rent of a hall. But when they came there on February 20, they were told that the main hotel engineer prohibited anybody to enter the hall «for technical reasons».

The hotel staff, however, confidentially informed Antonchyk that on the eve of the Assembly the main engineer had been called to Minsk Executive Committee «for a talk». But Siarhei Antonchyk, being an experienced poli-

meeting had been shouting anti-State and anti-presidential slogans, but categorically refused to repeat the slogans to the court. He also said he had seen Hiunter among the participants of the unauthorized procession going from Banhalor square to the center of the city. Iawhen Saroka said that he had seen B. Hiunter among the detained participants of the procession. In reality Hiunter was called to Savetski DDIA by a call-up paper and came there on October 18. Then he was taken to the court. When Hiunter's advocate asked Z. Iukhnovich and I. Saroka why they hadn't given any information about Hiunter's participation in the procession in their reports and protocol, they answered that it had happened long ago and they didn't remember well. By this answer they confirmed their witnesses given at the previous case consideration. Due to such circumstances the judge had to postpone the case consideration to April 20 because of the necessity to watch the video-materials shot by the police.

The Information department of HRC «Viasna»

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tician and anticipating such turn of events had prepared a «reserve hall», where the organization assembly was carried out.

The real reasons for the postponement of the registration of Siarhei Antonchyk's WU «Unity» are obvious for those people who watch the events going on in Belarus. The main reason is the personality of the organization chairman, S. Antonchyk, who is in rather bad relations with the present authorities. Some years ago he, being a deputy of the Supreme Soviet of 12th Convocation, read his report on corruption in the command of A. Lukashenko, who at that time was the legitimate Belarusian president. Large State newspapers that were to have published this report were issued with white spaces because of «censorship».

From these time all the people mentioned in the report started to retire one after another. Only one man from Siarhei Antonchyk's report, the illegitimate Belarusian president, is still at power. He will hardly like Antonchyk's new appearance on the political stage.

Uladzimir PADHOL

To Be On the Safe Side

On April 3 Piotr Piatrovich Malanachkin, deacon of «Blagodat» church based in t. Horki (Mahilew region), applied to the Human Rights Center «Viasna». In his application he wrote: «At 11.45 a.m. on 2.04.2000 I was stopped by a man in the police uniform at the entrance of Ianka Kupala park. He checked my documents, the posters and papers I carried with me. Then people in civil clothes took me to a District Department of Internal Affairs where I was kept for more than two hours without any reasons. Then I was taken to the place of my detention. I saw the doors of my car open. One of the tires was flat. People in civil clothes took away my placards in an unknown direction. I ask you to inform the publicity about this fact of impudence and iniquity».

It's necessary to make a short comment on Malanachkin's application. The thing is that on April 2 a number of Minsk citizens gathered near Ianka Kupala monument in order to put there flowers and carry out a liturgy in honor of the patriots who had perished while defending independence of Belarus. Priests of the main confessions were invited to the action.

When Mr. Malanachkin, was going to the park with the texts of psalms in his hands, the police detained him and took him to Minsk City Police Department. The policemen thought that Malanachkin was carrying fly-sheets.

After the policemen examined the «arrested» texts, they dismissed Malanachkin. As a result of the policemen's actions the people who gathered near the monument didn't receive the texts of psalms and weren't able to take an active part in the liturgy together with the priests.

During his speech on the Bealrusian TV Minsk portrevee V. Chykin stated that there hadn't been any violations during the action that had taken place on April 2. Of course, there were no violations from the side of the action participants, it was the police who again violated the law.

Belarus Will Be Free!

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The thing is that the Presidential Elections that were carried out in the Russian Federation confirmed the demonstrative victory of Uladzimir Putin. In such situation one has to recollect the old Roman proverb: «It's better to be the first man in a province than the second in the capital». Why is it then so necessary to turn one's own capital into a province?

On April 2 the Belarusian opposition traditionally carries out actions of protest against incorporation of Belarus into Russia. This year April 2 was appointed the Day of Commemoration of the Belarusians who had perished for independence of their motherland. About 1 000 people gathered in the square around Ianka Kupala's monument. They lightened candles in the memory of their heroic ancestors. Priests of the tree main confessions carried out the commemorative liturgy. The policemen, who «had come to the top» on March 25 were unusual calm. There were only few of them at the action. That's why it was carried out almost without any incidents unlike the previous ones, when blood was run along the streets of Minsk.



Andrei NALIVA

Weird Division

Appeal to the journalists who work on the territory of the Republic of Belarus

The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) haven't yet given any results of investigation of the events that took place on March 25, including the illegal detention of journalists and rude forcible actions towards them to the Belarusian Association of Journalists. At the same time, MIA apologized to the Russian journalists. By this action MIA divided the journalists into two parts. The majority of the injured, the Belarusian journalists, were not given any excuses. None of the guilty workers of the law machinery were punished.

In order to defend the constitutional right to freely gather, receive and distribute information the Belarusian Association of Journalists has to apply to all the journalists who work on the territory of Belarus with the request to stop elucidation of the everyday activities of the police till the people guilty in the outrageous incident on March 25 are punished.

Board of the Belarusian Association of Journalists

April 12, 2000

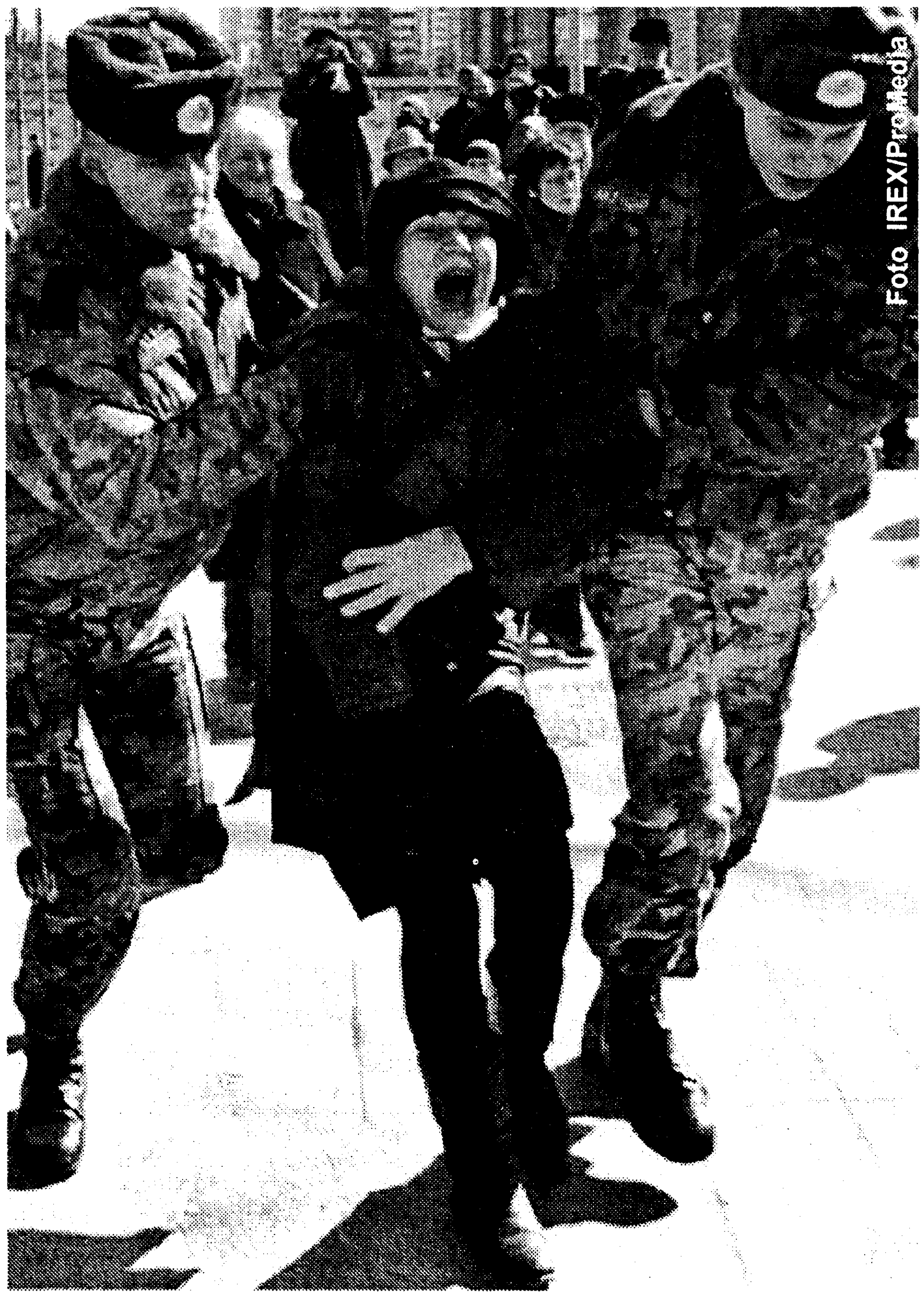
Trials and Sentences

On April 3 judges of Savetski District Court Aksana Reliava, Ruslan Kazadaiew and Ina Sheika considered six administrative cases against participants of the opposition action carried out on March 25 and made the following sentences:

1. *Iawhen Kardash* – justified
2. *Uladzimir Burdyka* – the trial was postponed to April 10
3. *Aliaxei Shakhowski* – warned
4. *Siarhei Shechka* – warned
5. *Ihar Kartel* – warned
6. *Mikola Iawmenenka* – the trial was postponed to April 5

On April 4 judge Aksana Reliava judged vice-chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the 13th convocation *Anatol Liabedzka*.

Anatol Liabedzka was detained together with journalist A. Tamkovich at 11. 45 a.m. (before the beginning of the meeting) by three men in civil clothes in a kilometer's distance from Iakub Kolas square. These «men in civil» refused to show their documents. When Liabedzka offered them to come to the nearest police-point, they started to twist his arms and pull him into a car. A. Liabedzka and Tamkovich understood that they were detained by workers of the law machinery only when some policemen came nearer and began to help the «people in civil» to box the detained into the car. In general the «detention» resembled the events that had happened to I. Zakharanka a year ago, to Hanchar and Krasowski – last autumn. The location of these three people is still unknown. All the more so that the Belarusian press often expresses the thought that Liabedzka will be the next person to disappear. Liabedzka was taken to the military unit based in



Maiakowski street. There he was kept till the evening. Then a number of arrested people including Liabedzka were taken to a special police department in Akrestsin street.

Consideration of Liabedzka's case started on March 27 and was postponed to April 4.

During the trial the USA ambassador D. Speckhard, representatives of other Embassies, journalists from the main Russian TV-channels were present. The police-witnesses, being asked by the judge about reasons for Liabedzka's detention, said that they had not seen, didn't know and didn't remember anything. Liabedzka was justified.

The same day seven other cases were considered. The following sentences were made:

1. *Victar Ivashkevich* (vice-chairman of the BPF «Adradzhenne», editor-in-chief of the independent newspaper «Rabochy» («Worker») – justified
2. *Uladzimir Illiukevich* – justified
3. *Anatol Rabkavets* – fined 44 million rubles
4. *Zmitser Hunich* – fined 44 million rubles
5. *Uladzimir Viarowkin* – justified
6. *Aliaxei Kukharonak* – warned

On April 5 trials over *Mikola Iawmenenka* and *Aliaxandr Chakholski* were conducted.

Mikola Iawmenenka was seized by the police on March 25 and was kept in the special police department in Akrestsin street till March 27. Iawmenenka was judged by Ruslan Kazadaiew and advocated by Vera Stramkowskaia. His



In the photos: Minsk, March 25, 2000.

case was closed because of absence of corpus delicti.

Aliaxandr Chakholski was judged by Aksana Reliava and advocated by Natallia Tarasiuk. During the detention Chakholski was severely beaten. He was also kept in the special police department in Akrestsin street till March 27. On March 30 he had to go to a forensic expertise to have his beating examined.

Two police-witnesses, Siarhei Ramanowski and Iury Valadzko, were present at the trial. They falsely witnessed that it was them who had detained Chakholski because he «had been shouting against president». I. Valadzko said: « There were very many people who violated the public order. That's why we detained them. We detained eight or nine men. I didn't detain women». But when the advocate warned the witnesses that Chakholski had had his beating examined and had applied to a Prosecutor's office they started to doubt whether they had detained him. Valadzko said that he had first seen Chaknolski in Savetski DDIA during composition of protocols of administrative infringement. As a result the consideration of Chakholski's case was postponed.

On April 10 two administrative cases were considered at Savetski District Court.

Judge Ina Sheika considered the administrative case against Uladzimir Zhyvitsa, found him guilty of violation of Article No. 1671. of the Code of Administrative Infringements (CAI) of the Republic of Belarus (violation of order of holding of meetings, processions, demonstrations and pickets) and warned him.

Judge Ruslan Kazadaiew considered Uladzimir Burdyka's case, found him guilty of violation of the same Article and also warned him.

The Information Department of HRC «Viasna»

«CONVEYER» IN ACTION...

DURING THE TRIALS THE POLICE WITNESSES FLOUNDERED IN THEIR WITNESSES BUT THE JUDGES BELIEVED THEM FIRST OF ALL



The Human Rights Center «Viasna» monitored all the trials over the people detained on March 25 during celebration of the Day of Freedom. More than 60 Belarusian citizens were judged. Public defenders and observers from «Viasna» were present at the majority of the trials. According to their conclusion these trials differed from those conducted in previous years. Firstly, 17 people were justified. In previous years judges usually made strict sentences. Frankly speaking, they ought to have justified all the defendants, because there weren't any meetings or processions in Frantsysk Skaryna Avenue, Kharuzhai and Varvashenia streets, the places where the people were detained. The police detained people in the streets without making much difference between ordinary passers-by and the people who were going to the opposition action. All the defendants were accused of violation of Article No. 167.1 of CAI (violation of order of holding of meetings, processions, demonstrations and pickets). The accusations were similar and the process of the case considerations turned into a peculiar conveyer.

The policemen who «protected the public order» on March 25 were divided into the function groups of seizure, escort, composition of reports and protocols. That's why, as it was found out at the trials, the policemen who had drawn the reports didn't really know what violations had made the people who «had violated the public order» (quotation from the protocols). At the trials police-witnesses insistently stated that they had detained the defendants. Sometimes the policemen were informed that people whom they had ostensibly detained had been severely beaten during detention, fixed their beatings in the forensic expertise and were going to sue against those who had beaten them. On hearing this the policemen started saying they didn't remember properly because they had made 10-15 detentions on March 25.

Sometimes the places of detentions stated in the protocols differed from the places the police-witnesses spoke about. The police-witness Valiantsin Shymanski even said that he had detained people in Varvashenia street because there headquarters of the BPF was situated and he had been ordered to detain all the people who had gone out of it. But in the reports the policemen usually wrote that they had made the detentions in Frantsysk Skaryna Avenue, 54. This mess in the witnesses given was used by the advocates and the public defenders who managed to prove the necessity of closure of such cases because of absence of corpus delicti.

Six administrative cases were directed to Savetski District Department of Internal Affairs for further investigation and appropriate execution of the case documents because of corrections in the reports and protocols. There was one case that seemed weird to the court: what violation made a citizen who was going along Frantsysk Skaryna Avenue not far from Iakub Kolas square and carried a white-red-white flag in his bag? The reason for his detention, as it was found out, was that he was speaking Belarusian. Our «protectors of the public order» don't like it... It is the more weird that all the people, who speak in Belarusian language, were using «Russian foul language» during the detention. At one of the trials Andrei Fedzianin, senior police lieutenant, said that he didn't understand the Belarusian language because of his being Russian. But it's his duty to know State language of the country, if he is a policeman.

The strictest sentences were made on March 27, the day when the first trials were conducted. Ales Pahartsaw and Ales Bondaraw were sentenced to three days of administrative arrest, Mikhail Hladukhaw – to five. Viachaslaw Siwchyk, vice-chairman of the BPF «Adradzhenne», was sentenced to 10 days of administrative arrest. During these 10 days Siwchyk was made to change five cells. He was kept in a cell with a smashed window for four days. It was cold out-doors and snow was falling. People ill with tuberculosis were kept together with Siwchyk. The last day of his imprisonment he spent in a cell where a disinfection was made. It was made when the prisoners were in the cell and they had to breeze the poisoned air.

At the trials judges trusted police-witnesses more. For instance, Anatol Rabkavets and Zmitser Hunich were seized in Varvashenia street. The citizens who also participated in the trial and the run-through of the operative tapes confirmed this fact. But the policemen who had detained them said that it was in Iakub Kolas street. And the judge sentenced A. Rabkavets and V. Hunich to pay 44 000 rubles as a fine.

Members of HRC «Viasna» participated in the trials as public defenders. In many aspects thanks to their qualified assistance and defense the majority of defendants received minimal punishment – they were warned. But court is court, and if these people are detained this year once more, they will receive more strict sentences.

Leanarda KATKOVICH

Events Facts Comments

(begins on page 1)

On April 8 newspaper «Narodnaia Volia» («People's Freedom») published the appeal to Parliaments of democratic countries, submitted by mothers and wives of the people persecuted by the regime. In the appeal it is said: «The regime turned the Day of Freedom into the day of terror, demonstrating its hate to democracy, liberty, human rights. We, mothers and wives of those who are persecuted by the regime, strike a blow not only for our friends and relatives. We also compassionate distressful mothers and wives of the militaries and policemen, whom the wild possessors of the power make to break the Christian moral norms, scoff over women and elderly people, turn into the butchers of their own nation».

On April 10 82 organizers of «Charnobylski Way-2000» submitted an application to Minsk Executive Committee, asking to permit them holding of a meeting and procession on the day of the 14th anniversary of the accident at Charnobyl Nuclear Power Station. The organizers plan to gather participants of the action in Iakub Kolas Square and go to Independence Square along Frantsysk Skaryna avenue. There are reasons that make us think the authorities will dislike this scenario and won't permit the action. In this case April 26 is likely to become one more «hot day» of spring-2000.

On March 25, during the opposition action in Babryisk, 14 people were detained *On April 11* the trial over three of them started at Babrusk Leninski District Court. Ales Chyhir, Viachaslaw Sizunow, and Iury Kisliak are charged with violation of the «famous» Article No. 167.1 of the Code of Administrative Infringements (CAI) of the Republic of Belarus (order of holding of meetings, pickets, demonstrations, and processions).

On April 11 judge Zazulia considered the administrative case against the member of «Young Front» Iuras Ziemliakow at Vitsebsk Pershamaiski District Court. I. Zemliakow was charged with violation of Article No. 156 of CAI for having made some scriptures on the wall of Vitsebsk Butter Factory on February 16. The judge set aside Iuras's petition concerning admission to the trial of a representative of the BPF «Adradzhenne» without any explanations. I. Zemliakow was found guilty an fined 2 200 rubles.

On April 11 A.Lukashenko made his annual speech to deputies of the Palate of Representatives and members of the Soviet of the Republic. His speech was broadcast live program on Belarusian radio and TV. After his speech A. Lukashenko answered people's questions. Vice-chairman of the Commission on the International Relations with countries of the Commonwealth of the Independent Countries Aliaxandr Shpilewski asked Lukashenko about the possibility of elimination of contacts with the international organizations that don't recognize his variant of the Belarusian Constitution.

A. Lukashenko explained that according to his observations the western politicians now don't bring up the question of the illegitimate nature of the referendum carried out in 1996 and the new Constitution. He said: «The West retained his honor and dignity and gave up its claims». A. Lukashenko also stated that he carried out the politics that didn't coincide with interests of the West, but, in regard to the international organizations, «their activity can't be eliminated. And, though in some cases they cross the dead-line, in general they haven't yet come to illegal actions». But the main reasons why A. Lukashenko considers it impossible to continue worsening of his relations with the international organizations is the future elections to the Parliament. «We ought to carry the elections without a weak point», — he said. In connection with this Lukashenko thinks that exclusion of OSCE Consultative-observing group, for instance, will result only in the next escalation of relations between Belarus and the West.



On April 6 a well-know politician, the first chairman of the National Executive Committee, one of the most authoritative opposition activists Henadz Karpenka was commemorated at Maskowskiia Cemetery. A year ago he died in the circumstances that let us suspect the regime's relationship to this death.

On April 12 chairman of the BPF «Adradzhenne» Vintsuk Viachorka made a statement in which he said: «On April 11, 2000 A. Lukasenko, who is the usurper-governor of Belarus since July 1999, said that he plans to place a 300 000-Russian-Belarusian military group in Belarus. It means that he plans to garrison more than 200 000 of Russian militaries for «opposition to the West». This idea is a complementary unit of the plan of restoration of the Russian Empire Kremlin tries to execute with the assistance of the puppet regime in Minsk. So called «treaty of unity» signed by an usurper from the Belarusian side and ratified by the illegitimate «palate» starts to be filled with a sinister content. Our country is turning into a military bridgehead for the Empire that again tries to show its teeth to the civilized world. Genocide towards Chechens shows what Russian imperialists usually do to freedom-loving peoples. We, Belarusians, don't want to have the same situation in our country. We warn Russia that in the case of realization of the insane plan to garrison the Russian forces in Belarus the forces that stand for independence will consider this action as occupation with all the ensuing consequences. We apply to European and American democratic countries asking them to prevent the military insanity and don't allow to destroy the Belarusian independence».

On April 11 and 12 pickets against the obligatory distribution of undergraduates of the higher educational establishments organized by the Belarusian Unity of Students (BUS) took place. The pickets were carried out in Dziarzhynski avenue, in front of the main building of Minsk Medical Institute. About 20



The Belarusian businessmen continue to struggle for their rights. On April 2 a meeting against Lukashenko's politics towards private businessmen was carried out. It was organized by the Independent Trade-union of Businessmen with Valery Levanewski at the head.

people took part in them. Participants of the pickets held posters with such slogans as: «STOP the distribution!», «My work is my choice», «You are a student? Go to a colony!», «My parents' taxes are payment for my education», «Soviet farm «Haradzets» is waiting for you. Start your carrier!». BUS submitted more than 10 letters with the demand to stop the forcible distribution, especially distribution to the territory polluted with radiation. They received some letters with come-offs instead of answers. But BUS will continue struggle for abolition of the obligatory distribution that violates students' rights. The more that in some higher educational establishments this distribution is now used even to those students who study on the payment basis.

On April 12 Nina Bahinskaia went into Independence Square in Minsk with a white-red-white flag. She took her grandson with her. The police detained her and took to a police-point. Bahinskaia said that she wanted to remind citizens of Belarus of massacre of the opposition deputies from BPF «Adradzhenne» in April 1999 in the sitting hall of the Supreme Soviet on Lukashenko's order. The policemen composed a protocol of violation of the law on processions and meetings. Soon N. Bahinskaia will be judged. We don't know whether her small grandson will be judged too.

On April 12 an open trial concerning the civic case initiated because of Victar Medziak's complaint about illegal actions of chairman of Baranavichy Executive Committee who had transferred the time of an opposition picket started at Baranavichy Town Court (Brest region). In his application to the court V. Medziak asked the court to find the decision of Baranavichy Executive Committee about transfer of the time of the picket from April 15 to April 22 illegal and bind the Committee to apologize for disruption of the action through the newspapers «Inter-press», «Shah» («Step») and «Nash Krai» («Our Region»). Though the court didn't satisfy Medziak's ask to oblige the defendant to give excuses to the plaintiff, actions of Baranavichy Executive Committee were (!) found illegal. The court levied from the defendant 11 000 rubles plus compensation of the state due paid by V. Medziak in favor of the plaintiff. Members of Baranavichy branch of HRC «Viasna» participated in the trial. The peculiarity of this case is that it was ex-chairman of Baranvichy Executive Committee and present chairman of Minsk Executive Committee Mikhail Pawlaw who participated in the trial in the capacity of defendant. By the way, his first action at the new post was dispersal of the peaceful opposition action in Minsk on March 25.

On April 13 the Belarusian authorities decided to deport the Polish priest Zbigniew Karolik, parson of Brest catholic curacy. He was ordered to leave the territory of Belarus till 10 p.m. on April 14 and fined 20 minimal salaries (approximately $50). Zbigniew Karolik has been vicar of Brest church of Ascension of Cross for more than 10 years. But on March 18 the police detained him and took to a police point, where they composed the protocol of violation of the passport regime. It happened because the local authorities have refused to register to permit the priests work in Brest curacy for several years. Consequently, they refused to register his stay in Belarus. Before the deportation the faithful of the curacy received the answer to their appeals to the «vertical» with the request to register their priest. In his response vice-chairman of Brest Regional Executive Committee Valery Zakharchanka wrote that during his stay in Belarus the priest had repeatedly abused his full powers of the foreign priest. Among the priest's ostensible violations Zakharchanka mentions the attempts to interfere with the activity of the church committee, direct appeals to State bodies, interference in the activity of the Union of Poles and holding of religious actions with unauthorized drawing of foreign pilgrims... These accusations stroke all members of the curacy. The faithful categorically disagree with the accusation that Zbigniew interfered with activity of the church committee. They are ready to stand for their priest.



The case against ex-speaker of Belarus, candidate or the Presidential position Mikhail Chyhir, is falling into pieces. The investigative bodies spent a year on the case investigation but failed to collect enough compromising materials on the former high Belarusian official, who had retired before the illegitimate referendum of 1996 because of his disagreement with Lukashenko's politics. Though the trial is still going on the majority of accusations, as Chyhir and his advocates said in their press-conference, had been abolished.

On the photo: during the press-conference (from left to right) advocates Aliaxandr Pylchanka and Hary pPahaniaila, Mikhail Chyhir, public defender from HRC «Viasna» Barys Hiunter.

On April 12 chairman of the Belarusian Social-democratic Party «Narodnaia Hramada» (BSDP «NH») Mikalai Statkevich and president of association of trade-unions «BCDP» Victar Babaied submitted to Minsk City Executive Committee an application in which they ask to allow them holding of a demonstration on May1. According to their plan they intend to gather about 20 000 people in Iakub Kolas Square at 10 a.m. Then they will carry out a procession to Independence Square along Frantsysk Skaryna Avenue. In the square they plan to hold a meeting under the slogans «Freedom, justice, solidarity, independence» from 11 to 12 a.m. Traditionally the official demonstration on May 1 also ends in Independence Square. In this case the organizers will refuse from the independent demonstration and join the workers' columns, as they did last years.

On April 13 a citizen of Minsk, member of the BPF «Adradzhenne» Valiantsin Baranaw received the decision of Slaihorsk City Court (Minsk region) to stop the administrative case against him because of expiration of limit of his responsibility. The police tried to charge V. Baranaw with organization of an unauthorized procession on November 18, 1999 devoted to Slutsk riot against Bolsheviks in 1920. But the protocol of administrative infringement contained some mistakes. The judge had to direct it for brushing-up. As the judge didn't receive the correct variant of the protocol in twomonths' time, she had to justify Baranaw.

At the beginning of April the trial over the Russian businessman Anatol Silivonchyk who had directed the «seizure» of Mikalaiewka village situated in Svetlahorsk area by the military-patriotic brigade Berkut» from the Russian city Surhut finished at Svetlahorsk City Court (Mahiliow region). A. Silivonchyk was sentenced to three years of imprisonment in a strict-security colony.

In April Homel Region Court adopted the decision about liquidation of Homel public organization «Union of the unemployed» created in 1992 by a well-known Homel defender of human rights Iawhen Murashka. Justice Board of Homel Executive Committee directed the sue concerning the liquidation to the court. The reason for liquidation was that «Union of the Unemployed» didn't pass the Republican re-registration. During his speech in the court Murashka said that the organization had no money for re-registration because it consisted of unemployed people.

PRISONERS' PARADISE?

On the last page of the bulletin the editorial staff usually published diaries and essays of the people who had spent some time in the Belarusian prisons and Investigative Isolators (II): Mikola Kachan, Andrei Melnikaw, Aliaxei Shydlowski, Ales Bialiatski, Valery Shchukin... Our correspondent Tatsiana Snitko has recently visited Swedish Investigative Isolator (II), an analog of the Belarusian establishments in Valadarski and Akrestsin streets. But, unlike our other authors, she was there on excursion only. Nevertheless, we think that it will be interesting for our readers to compare the life conditions of Belarusian and Swedish prisons.

During our visit to Sweden we, representatives of HRC «Viasna» had the possibility to visit Stockholm II. Swedish Investigative prison Kronobergsheknet doesn't have exactly the same status as Minsk UZ-15/13-1 (establishment based in Valadarski street). Stockholm II is a fashionable ten-stored building a citizen of our country will hardly immediately take for a prison. Near this building there is Stockholm City Investigative Police Board. If one has a close look at this monument of architecture, he will soon notice bars on its windows.

Minsk Investigative Prison, Pishchalawski Castle, is also a monument of architecture, but our City Police Board looks much worse.

Around the Swedish Investigative Prison there is a high gauze (in our country – a high stone fence) and large gates. This is the point where the similarity of Valadarskikdfgf and Kronenbergsheknet ends.

The hall of the Swedish II doesn't at all resemble a prison corridor with the exhausted, uneasy prisoners who stand in queues in order to receive parcels from their relatives, have a meeting with them or the prison officials. Prison servants meet us with the smiles similar to those one can see on faces of the girls who work as hotel receptionists. In a minute we are turning up to the ninth floor in a lift cabin. There the special department where the visitors meet with the prison administration is situated.



In the prison canteen.

Mats Landebrink, vice-head of the prison security, answers all our questions and is surprised to hear some of them.

Then he leads us up and down the bulks and floors of Kronenbergsheknet.

The Investigative Prison of Kronenbergsheknet was founded in 1975. About 300 people work there as prison staff, 200 of them – in the daytime. About 16 people guard the prison at night. Besides the stuff members (guards, doctors, barbers, psychologists) many volunteers work there with prisoners as well. Most of them are representatives of Red Cross. Representatives of catholic, orthodox and islamic confessions also visit the prison. In Sweden there's even an organization of priests, whose name can be translated as «Fellowship of Spiritual Assistance to the Imprisoned».



Stockholm Police City Board.

A representative of the prison administration told us that there were about 300 cells in the isolator. Every year there are 6-7 thousand «visitors». Half of them are suspected of crime commitments and are kept under investigation. All the others are only detained. They are soon released or transferred to other establishments (hospitals, for instance). Drunk and stoned people often get there. Alcoholics are taken to a special department of the investigative isolator (analog of the Belarusian sobering-up station), whilst drugaddicts are cured at hospitals. Very drunk people and mentally ill people picked up in the streets by the police are immediately taken to hospitals as well. So, this establishment combines functions of investigative isolator, a special police de-partment and a sobering-up station.

Swedish law machinery doesn't pack prisons with the people who are under investigation. Usually it's prosecutor who decides whether it is necessary to keep a person suspected in a crime commitment in prison. Usually the decision to keep such persons in the investigative isolator is adopted if they can destroy the evidences of their crimes otherwise. All the detained people have advocates. In most cases the suspected persons stay in the isolator for not more than a month, it is the term of crime investigation. After the investigation is over the trial is conducted. Of course, there are some exceptional cases. For instance, some years ago the investigation of a criminal case lasted for about three years. According to Mr. Landebrink's information it was the criminal case against a local fascist who was not a Swedish citizen but an emigrant from one of the Western countries and had killed some foreigners.

(to be continued)

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